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ABSTRACT

The reasons for recidivism remaining a problem among prisoners, in spite of the fact that many prisoners may have received vocational training, may be based on: (1) the way education programs are implemented in various correctional institutions--without any over-all plan or strategy; and (2) the type of individual being educated. Many inmates are from minority groups or low socioeconomic levels and carry over, into corrections education, years of failure in the school system and a poor attitude. Some modifications of the traditional framework of education are being attempted in penal institutions in Pennsylvania. Emphasis is upon the unique learning characteristics and needs of the learner and individual differences. An academic center has been initiated within the prisons' vocational educational training programs. Upon entry, inmates are tested and their academic abilities are evaluated. Remedial work is needed for the majority of the students in reading and mathematics. Following this educational diagnosis, individualized education plans are drawn up for each student, and time is allowed for remedial instruction concurrent with the vocational education program. Case studies are presented of seven students: the diagnosis of needs arrived at by testing, the individualized education plan drawn up for the student, the educational materials selected to meet the individual's needs, the general progress of the student, and pre- and post-test results. (JD)

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"Fostering Success of Non-Traditional Students"

presented by

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Graduate School of Education Program

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"Fostering Success With Non-Traditional Students"

Education programs in Correctional Institutions are offered for several reasons, some of which are: Personal Development of the inmate, vocational training and development, help to structure time, and to decrease the rate of recidivism. However, the last reason stated here is often times controverted.

Studies show that recidivism has not decreased because of education and skill development. (Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks, 1975.)[1] The problem of recidivism was identified as the major concern in the field of Corrections by the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Standards and Goals in its report to the Law Enforcement Assistance in 1966, and -today- it remains a major problem.

The Pennsylvania Bureau of Corrections, in 1980, announced that of the approximately 8,000 convicted felons housed in Pennsylvania Correctional Institutions, 50% of the individual are recidivists. (The State Correctional Institution at Pittsburgh has about a 65% rate.)

As a response to the recommendations made by the National Advisory Commission, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Correction Education Division, in co-operation with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Corrections established educational and vocation training programs in the nine correctional institutions in 1968. They were initiated on the assumption that they would be a deterent to recidivism by helping the ex-offender acquire and retain employment upon release according to the original goal statements developed between the Department of Education and the Bureau of Corrections. However, as alread stated, recidivism remains a problem.

As mentioned in the January 1982 issue of the Journal of Correctional Education (J. Krisak and S. Ross).[2] the reasons for recidivism remaining a problem may be based on the way education programs are implemented in various Correctional Institutions -- without any over-all plan or strategy and, secondly, the type of individual being educated.

Adult students, in general, bring widely diverse life experiences to the learning situation, but often times, the prisoner has negative experiences. Many of the inmates are from minority groups, low-socio-economic levels, poor financial conditions, etc. They often are oriented to failure, and prison is often times seen as an official label of failure to conform to the norms of society. This is usually preceded by years of failure in the school system. This failure and poor attitude is carried over into corrections education.

Then too, usually, the individual teacher or administrator will make the decisions as to what will be taught and to whom. Most frequently, the content and methods are of a traditional nature.

Some modifications of the traditional framework of education have been suggested by Joseph Krisack and Steven M. Ross in their writing of "An Adaptive Instructional Model for Correctional Education." (CEA Journal, January 1981.)[3] They maintain that the unique learning characteristics and needs of the learner should be considered, and that individual differences should be taken into account. Psycho-educational testing is involved in the latter. Individualized Education Programming is strongly recommended. Some aspects of such programming are:

--Fixed-content, variable-time, fixed-proficiency

--Fixed-content, variable-time, variable-proficiency

--Variable-content, fixed-time, variable-proficiency

--Variable-content, variable-time, fixed proficiency

--Variable-content, variable-time, variable-proficiency

as recommended in Individualizing Vocational and Technical Instruction (Pucel and Kraak).[4]

The model suggested by Krisak and Ross is:

1. Global diagnosis to classify individual to a general instructional sequence.
2. More specific diagnosis to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses to aid in the development of an individualized educational package.
3. Prescription of instruction which includes objectives of instruction, materials, media to be used, and time frames for completion.
4. Personalized system of instruction using the Keller Plan with support from student-teachers.
5. Criterion Referenced testing to measure content mastery and the use of peers as monitors and tutors.
6. The recording of progress through computer management and logical sequencing of educational activities.
7. The use of incentives to insure a high degree of inmate participation.

The State Correctional Institution at Pittsburgh, PA (SCIP) is a maximum security prison for adult males. When men arrive at the prison, a clinical staff interviews them and administers a battery of tests. On the basis of this information, the prisoners are informed of their eligibility to participate in academic or vocational training programs at the institution.

Academic programs are available at three levels: Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), and College.

Vocational training is offered in the areas of Welding, Plumbing, Electronics, and Automotive repair.

After being informed of the level for which they qualify, inmates choose whether or not to enroll in a program or programs.

School administrators at SCIP, after careful study and keen observation, have decided upon a new approach to help the academic development of those inmates who select Vocational Education Programs.

Many of the students in the Vocational Training Programs do not have their GED certificates or high school diplomas and, consequently, lack basic academic skills needed to function in the present vocational programs. Some of the men have their GED certificates or high school diplomas but still lack necessary academic skills needed to function in the Vocational Programs. The vocational instructors do not have the time to teach the fundamental Reading, Writing, or Math skills on an individual basis as is needed, nor are they trained to teach such basic skill development. And so, an Academic Center in the Vocational Educational Training Program was initiated. This Academic Center was to focus on the needs of the particular inmate student, and based on the concept of Competency Based Instruction.

Some of the mathematic skills needed in various vocational areas are: ELECTRONICS - ALGEBRA, PLUMBING - GEOMETRY, WELDING - BASIC MATH, AUTOMOTIVE - BASIC MATH (fractions, decimals, metrics, etc.). And so, if the inmate is defecient in any one of these particular areas, Individualized Education Plans will be possible.

It is also important that the students be able to read and write adequately to function successfully in each of the classes. In order to individualize instruction in any vocational area, the students need the following verbal skills:

Understanding specialized vocabulary

comprehension of cause and effect

Ability to follow directions

Critical analysis of textual information

Perceiving relationships

Understanding logical sequences

Reading for the main idea and other basic reading skills.

Now that the Academic Center has been established, it is the responsibility of the Vocational Academic Instructor, who is also the Coordinator of the program, to diagnose and identify the specific academic skills needed for each student. He designs and develops and Individualized Education Plan for each student in the program. The basic guidelines for these IEPs are taken from the Coordinated Vocational Education and Training Manual.[5]

Prior to the establishment of the Academic Center, the vocational school students were not able to attend any of the ABE or GED classes because the programs were conducted at the same time. The vocational students were involved in the vocational training on a full-time basis from 8:30 - 3:30 each day and did not have an opportunity to participate in the academic programs mentioned. With the academic instructor assigned to the Vocational Department, it is now possible to integrate GED and ABE training into the vocational program.

Furthermore, those students who have a high school or GED diploma, but lack adequate entry level academic skills for a specific vocational area may be given academic prescriptions and instructions as needed.

The Personalized System of Instruction, the Individual Education Plan, and the Competency Based Education Plans are based on four underlying features;

1. Students enter and exit the course sequence at varying times.
2. Students move through the course work at a speed commensurate with their abilities.
3. Students progress only upon demonstration of mastery level of material(s).
4. Instruction does not rely upon lecture as the main vehicle of a student-teacher communication.

Other features of this approach are the use of Criterian Reference Testing to measure cortent mastery, and the use of peers or para-teachers as monitors and/or tutors, and the use of incentives throughout to insure a high degree of inmate participation.

At the risk of insulting the intelligence of the audience, I mention that the terms "competency based" and Performanced based" describe a curriculum that identifies what the person must do to successfully function in a specific occupation. The level of performance is clearly specified and the students verify learning by way of competencies which include the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective behaviors necessary. These competencies are minimum performance requirements and students can not advance until they have met them. (A competency based curriculum may be used effectively in a traditional setting, but it particularly lends itself to a "personalized" or "individualized" delivery system.)

Personalized instruction is student oriented and its overall goals are to meet individual needs and to provide for individual differences. The basic premise is that students learn different things at different rates, at differen times, and by different methods. It provides the students with alternatives fr which they select learning activities adaptable to their own learning style. Th length of time for the course or program depends upon the students' demonstrated competence rather than by some arbitrary time limit. Often times, personalized individualized are used interchangeably. Independent study, as well as one-to-one, small group, and large group, are all important parts of personalized instruction.

Ross and Krisack[6] mention that psycho-educational testing is or be involved in assessing individual differences in the learning process. Such assessments done at SCIP are: The General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB), the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT), the Revised Beta II, and all levels of the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE). Each inmate student is pre-tested in order to determine his verbal and non-verbal skills. After this pre-test, the IEPs are designed, according to the academic level of the particular inmate. The content of the learning materials is based upon the particular vocational program being pursued by the inmate student.

The Vocational Education-Competency Based Academic Program at SCIP follows the Planned Course Criteria published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education:[7]

1. A written statement of objectives to be achieved by the students. Objectives may be called by their generic names or derivations which include, but are not limited to, performance objectives, behavioral objectives, terminal objectives, or student outcomes.

They should be based on needs assessment data; include only global or general concepts; include knowledge, skill and attitudinal expectations of students; be measurable; be written so students, teachers, administrators, etc. understand what is expected of the student(s).

II. Content to be used to reach objectives for which credit is awarded at the Junior High and Senior High Levels. Planned course content should relate directly to planned course objectives, include time considerations and identify human and material resources.

III. Expected levels of achievement -- these should describe the criteria by which teachers will judge how well students have succeeded in achieving planned course objectives. (When planned courses are developed for heterogenous groups, they should include more than one level of expectation.)

IV. Procedures for Evaluation...should include standardized, teacher-created and other tests, planned observations, anecdotal records, student profiles, interviews, teacher judgment of student projects, etc.

The form selected by the Academic Instructor for the Individual Educational Plans follows a simple outline. A sample of a Mathematics IEP and one for Verbal Skills may be found in the Appendix. The Competency Based Instructional Expectancy is indicated in the IEPs in the Criterion of Successful Performance.

Samples of some of the Reading and Math Diagnosis Instruments used are:

A.) VERBAL SKILLS - INFORMAL READING ASSESSMENTS:

1.) Graded Word Lists -- levels 1/12

2.) Graded Passages

3.) Miscue Analysis (Biggs and Scales)

4.) Readability -- The Fry Formula

5.) Cloze Connections -- Richard A. Boring

6.) Adult Reading: Comprehension --Scott-Foresman Corrections Edit

a.) CULTURE

b.) COPING

c.) MESSAGES

d.) PEOPLE

7.) Language Experience Exercises:

a.) VERBAL (direct or on tape)

b.) WRITTEN

c.) VOCABULARY WORD CARDS

d.) DIACRITICAL MARKS, etc.

8.) Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) (all levels)

a.) READING/WRITING

b.) CONTENT VOCABULARY MATERIALS

B.) NON-VERBAL SKILLS - MATH ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS:

1.) TABE - Mathematics

2.) Pre-test in Addition, Subtractions, multiplication, division and fractions

3.) Non-commercial/teacher designed instruments

4.) Coordinated Vocational Educational and Training /Math and English

5.) Informal-impromptu themes and lessons as wanted or needed. (See Appendix)

Some selected individual student results for the Academic Center--Vocational Education Training as compared to the traditional classroom approach are:

INDIVIDUALIZED

PRE-TEST: Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE)--September, 1981)

Student #1: Reading Vocabulary 6.9

Reading Comprehension 6.0

TABE READING AVERAGE 6.4

POST TEST: Reading Vocabulary 8.2 (March, 1982)

Reading Comprehension 7.0

TABE READING AVERAGE 7.6

PRE-TEST: Math Skills: student was unable to complete the test because of poor basic math skills.

As a result of this students test scores in his PRE-TEST, and because the Readabilities performed on the Automotive Vocational School indicated that the main text book was on the ninth grade level, the supplementary manual was on the seventh/eighth grade level, and the MAVCC[8] materials measured out to the twelfth/college grade level, we agreed to work on his Verbal Skills as the main area of concentration, and to introduce him--gradually--to some basic math skills. (In May of 1982, this student took the GED for the first time. Primarily for some test sophistication. The scores have not been received, but a major accomplishment for him was that he was able to at least manage to complete the Math section of the GED.)

PRE-TEST: Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE)--September, 1981)

Student #2:	Reading Vocabulary	5.0	
	Reading Comprehension	7.0	
	TABE READING AVERAGE	6.0	
POST TEST:	Reading Vocabulary	6.0	--March, 1982)
	Reading Comprehension	8.0	
	TABE READING AVERAGE	7.0	
PRE-TEST:	Math Computation	6.2	--September, 1981
	Concepts and Problems	7.1	
	TABE MATH AVERAGE	6.7	
POST-TEST:	Math Computation	8.4	
	Concepts and Problems	7.5	--March, 1981
	TABE MATH AVERAGE	7.9	

At the request of the student, Math was selected as the major field of study and concentration. However, a minor program in the Verbal Skills was also designed. English and Grammar were his studies. (This student took the GED for the first time in January, 1982 and made a score of 201. A score of 245 is needed to receive a certificate.)

PRE-TEST: Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE)--September, 1981)

Student #3:	TOTAL READING AVERAGE	6.6	
	TOTAL MATH AVERAGE	6.5	
	TOTAL LANGUAGE	10.0	
	TOTAL TABE READING	7.7	
POST-TEST:	TOTAL READING AVERAGE	8.8	--March, 1982
	TOTAL MATH AVERAGE	8.0	
	TOTAL LANGUAGE	11.5	
	TOTAL TABE MATH	9.4	

A Verbal Skills study program was arranged for this student, with a heavy concentration in Social Studies - Reading Skills. Emphasis was placed upon the basic reading skills needed for effective reading: making inferences, looking for the main idea, evaluation and logic, recognizing style and tone, locating supporting ideas, and prior knowledge. The content of study was based upon the GED Social Studies Reading Skills.

Student #3 took the GED test in January, 1982 and passed with a score of 249, scoring in the 96th percentile in the Social Studies area.

PRE-TEST: Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE)-- July 1981

Student #4:		
	Reading Vocabulary	3.0
	Reading Comprehension	3.0
	TOTAL READING AVERAGE	3.0

POST TEST: Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE)-- January 1982

	Reading Vocabulary	7.4
	Reading Comprehension	7.2
	TOTAL READING AVERAGE	7.3
PRE-TEST:	Math Computation	5.2
	Concept and Problem	5.0
	TOTAL MATH AVERAGE	5.0
POST TEST:	Math Computation	9.8
	Concepts and Problems	8.2
	TOTAL MATH AVERAGE	9.0

Independent study was the basic approach this student chose. Most of the content material was based upon the GED texts, with a concentration on Reading Skills and English. He met with the Academic Instructor at the

completion of the particular unit which had been given to him. His perseverance was admirable.

PRE-TEST: Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE)--September, 1982

Student #5:	Reading Vocabulary	3.0
	Reading Comprehension	3.0
	TOTAL READING AVERAGE	3.0
POST TEST:	Reading Vocabulary	3.0
	Reading Comprehension	3.0
	TOTAL READING AVERAGE	3.0
PRE-TEST:	Math Computation	3.8
	Concepts and Problems	3.5
	TOTAL READING AVERAGE	3.6
POST TEST:	Math Computation	3.8
	Concepts and Problems	4.2
	TOTAL MATH AVERAGE	4.0

This particular student has an extremely hard time with learning. His comprehension is low, and his retention rate is even lower. He needs much more time and work. Because of his interest in the Bible and the Scriptures, which he reads very well, the Academic Instructor has recently introduced him to a reading program based upon the Firm Foundation Reading Approach.[9] Oather content materials are taken from workbooks and study guides which meet the level of interest and learning. His desire to learn and his motivation are the two things that are most encouraging about him.

Student #6 took the initiative and approached the Academic Instructor of the Vocational Education School. He is not really enrolled in any school program, but an exception was made for him -- because of his high interest level. He wanted to learn to read. This student has a high school diploma, but he cannot read.

When the TABE was given he was not able to complete either set of tests because of his extremely poor reading skills. In place of the TABE, an Informal Reading Assessment[10] was made. With this approach, the inmates Frustration Level was at the fourth grade level. His Instructional Level at three, and his Independent Level was pre-primer to primer. His comprehension skills are extremely good from pre-primer to level four on the Burns/Row Informal Reading Assessment Scale;[11]

The individualized approach designed for this young man was based upon the Adult Reading Comprehension: Coping, People, Culture, and Messages -- Level B,[12] which is the third grade level. A Fry Readability (see appendix) was made on the material and it also measured at the third grade level. A taping was made of his reading, and from that a mis-cue analysis was made. (Scales and Biggs.) The results of this mis-cue analysis lead to the development of word cards and vocabulary words at his level, and study cards were made up for learning about contractions and vowel sounds.(Appendix)

A language experience exercise was taped and later written out for him. Vocabulary words were selected from this approach, and also from words which are identified from his previous nights reading assignments.

His interest is extremely high.

At the present time, he is able to recognize and pronounce some three syllable words.

In completion of the Individualized Approach Case Presentations, student number seven pre-tested at the 4.9 level in Vocabulary Skills and the 8.2 level on the Comprehension Skills of the TABE. Because of his strength in Comprehension were elected to focus on Vocabulary development. Practically the same approach was used for student seven as was for student six.

The post test for this final case was 7.8 in Vocabulary, 8.7 in Comprehension with an over-all average of 8.2. His pre-test over-all average was 5.1.

Math skills measured out at an over-all average of 7.9 in the pre-test, and a 9.3 in the post-test.

A comparison of scores was made with students from the traditional classroom setting for the ABE/GED program. These scores are given in summary form on the following pages.

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TABE TEST RESULTS

NAME: Traditional / Conventional Classrooms

NUMBER:

	READING			MATH			LANGUAGE		
	VOC.	COMP.	AVER.	COMP.	CONC. AND PROB.	AVER.	MECH. OF EXP.	SPEL.	
PRE X POST DATE: 9-81	12.9	12.9	12.9	11.7	8.7	9.7			
PRE POST X DATE: 1-82	12.9	12.7	12.9	12.9	12.9	12.9			
PRE POST DATE:									
PRE X POST DATE: 9-81	10.1	6.8	8.5	5.7	5.0	5.4			
PRE POST X DATE: 1-82	12.7	7.1	9.6	7.8	9.0	8.3			
PRE POST DATE:									
PRE X POST DATE: 9-81	12.9	10.8	12.4	7.2	7.9	7.5			
PRE POST X DATE: 1-82	12.9	8.3	10.3	8.4	10.2	9.1			
PRE POST DATE:									

TABE TEST RESULTS

NAME: Traditional / Conventional Classroom

NUMBER:

	READING			MATH			LANGUAG	
	VOC.	COMP.	AVER.	COMP.	CONC. AND PROB.	AVER.	MECH. OF EXP.	SPE
PRE X POST DATE: 9-81	5,8	5.0	5.4	5.0	5.0	5.0		
PRE POST X DATE: 1-82	11.2	8.5	10.2	7.2	7.7	7.4		
PRE POST DATE:								
PRE X POST DATE: 9-81	5.8	6.7	6.1	7.1	7.6	7.4		
PRE POST X DATE: 1-82	6.8	7.8	7.2	7.6	7.3	7.4		
PRE POST DATE:								
PRE POST DATE:								
PRE POST DATE:								
PRE POST DATE:								

TABE TEST RESULTS

NAME: INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

NUMBER: _____

	READING			MATH			LANGUAGE	
	VOC.	COMP.	AVER.	COMP.	CONC. AND PROB.	AVER.	MECH. OF EXP.	SPEL.
PRE X POST _____ DATE: 9-81	6.9	6.2	6.5	Student was unable to finish the Math because of poor reading skills and poor				
PRE _____ POST X DATE: 3-82	8.2	7.0	7.6					
PRE _____ POST _____ DATE:								
PRE X POST _____ DATE: 9-81	5.0	7.0	5.5	6.2	7.1	6.7		
PRE _____ POST X DATE: 2-82	6.0	8.0	7.0	8.4	7.5	7.9		
PRE _____ POST _____ DATE:								
PRE X POST _____ DATE: 9-81			6.6			6.5		
PRE _____ POST X DATE: 3-82			8.8			8.0		
PRE _____ POST _____ DATE:								

TABE TEST RESULTS

NAME: INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

NUMBER:

	READING			MATH			LANGUAGE	
	VOC.	COMP.	AVER.	COMP.	CONC. AND PROB.	AVER.	MECH. OF EXP.	SPEL.
PRE X POST ____ DATE: 7-81	3.0	3.0	3.0	5.2	5.0	5.0		
PRE ____ POST X DATE: 1-82	7.4	7.2	7.3	9.8	8.2	9.0		
PRE ____ POST ____ DATE:								
PRE X POST ____ DATE: 10-81	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.8	3.5	3.6		
PRE ____ POST X DATE: 2-82	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.8	4.2	3.9		
PRE ____ POST ____ DATE:								
PRE X POST ____ DATE: 3-82	This student was not able to complete either set of tests because of his extremely poor reading skills.							
PRE ____ POST ____ DATE:	Post tests have not been given — not appropriate, as of yet.							
PRE ____ POST ____ DATE:								

TABE TEST RESULTS

NAME: INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

NUMBER:

	READING			MATH			LANGUAGE	
	VOC.	COMP.	AVER.	COMP.	CONC. AND PROB.	AVER.	MECH. OF EXP.	SPEL.
PRE X POST DATE: 10-81	5.3	4.0	4.6					
PRE POST X DATE: 1-82	8.5	7.0	7.7					
PRE POST DATE:								
PRE X POST DATE: 9-81	4.9	8.2	5.1	9.2	6.5	7.9		
PRE POST X DATE: 1-82	7.8	8.7	8.2	10.0	8.5	9.3		
PRE POST DATE:								
PRE POST DATE:								
PRE POST DATE:								
PRE POST DATE:								

An aspect of the program which was not followed-up on was that of giving a Self-Concept Test to the students. However, a decision was made not to give such a scale for fear of creating an atmosphere of over-testing. The idea is still alive and will be initiated in the 1982-83 school year.

Through counseling, listening, and observation, it seems as though the self-concepts of the inmates enrolled in the program is one of being grandiose when entering any given program. The more learning that takes place, the more realistic becomes the self concept -- at least it appears so to the Academic Instructor of the Vocational Education School at SCIP.

In conclusion, the Individualized Learning Approach has been very well received at this institution, and the inmates seem to prefer this approach. The problem becomes one of time, energy, and space. One of the most delicate areas encountered has been that of the cooperative efforts of all the teachers involved in the Vocational Training Program and the students who are operating on an individualized study plan. It becomes an issue of time in the "shop" and time in the Academic Center.